



February 12, 2004

NICKLES URGES SENATE TO SUPPORT BUDGET ON HIGHWAY BILL

WASHINGTON – Senate Budget Chairman Don Nickles today warned the Senate that the highway bill currently being debated is not paid for and will increase deficit spending.

“I know I’m going to hear a lot of speeches that the deficit is too high, so I want people to know, this bill is going to increase that number,” Nickles said in a statement on the Senate floor, referring to estimates from the Administration that the deficit for FY04 will top \$520 billion. “I’m amazed at people thinking we’re going to be able to get all these new highway monies for nothing. This is a 46-percent increase over the last highway bill. Where is the money coming from?”

Nickles spoke during debate on whether to waive the FY 2004 budget, which provides \$284 billion for the transportation bill.

The Administration Wednesday issued a Statement of Administration Policy opposing the bill being considered in the Senate because the spending levels are too high. White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan today re-iterated the Administration’s concerns, saying, “This is the first test for the Congress when it comes to spending restraint.”

TRANSPORTATION BILL COMPARISONS CONTRACT AUTHORITY TOTALS FOR 2004 – 2009 (\$ BILLIONS)				
Committee/Title	2004 Conference Budget Res.	Senate Transportation Bill	Pres. 2005 Budget	TEA-21 1998- 2003
TOTAL	284	318	256	218

Source: Senate Budget Committee